

BARNUM'S GREAT SHOW - Parade line-up - 1881

The following account of the Barnum parade in Washington, D.C., for season of 1881 is interesting to circus historians - for the reason that it represents an era when Barnum and Forepaugh were fighting for supremacy of the show-world. This information is from the N.Y. Clipper of April 23rd of the above year, which says that this show opened in Washington on April 18th, to immense audiences. The street parade in the morning of opening day, "was very fine." There were three fine bands, ten or twelve cages, one English mail-coach, four female riders, some twenty male riders, one performing Tiger cage, one performing Panther cage, one performing Lion cage, one performing Leopard cage, and one performing Hyena cage, all open to public view, with male and female keepers inside the cages with the animals. Eleven performing stallions, several four and six pony wagons and phaetons, a team of zebras, six trained oxen, Tom Thumb's carriage, a troupe of ten camels, four camels to a chariot, the baby elephant, two small elephants, four elephants to a coach, two elephants with females riding, four elephants to a wagon loaded with negroes, one calliope, one fancy wagon with a chime of bells, and several immense gilded show-wagons. What a fine parade to see - and what a pity that we fans and collectors cannot see at least another!

Evidently the reporter overlooked the Glass Serpent wagon when writing of the above parade - for in an account of the show when it played Salem, Mass., on June 3rd, 1881 - we read of the following accident: "While Barnum's circus was making the street parade in Salem, Mass., the van containing forty reptiles was ran away with, and collided with a wagon, damaging both teams and the driver of the vehicle, besides upsetting the car and throwing the snakes into the street. The immense crowd immediately dispersed, and the attendants succeeded in securing the serpents. \$120.00 was paid by the circus-agent, reimbursed the owner of the vehicle for the damage done".

From the rare courier booklet issued to advertise the Adam Forepaugh-Dr. Carver Wild West Exhibition Combination for the season of 1888, we read of the parade "The Wild West contingent is led by a genuine Rocky Mountain cow-boy brass band, costumed in true Western style, and discoursing the stirring airs of the frontier, followed by wild Indians in War Paint and feathers, ranchmen, scouts, guides, wild buffaloes, elks, etc., the old Deadwood stage coach, with four horses driven by its former driver, a genuine prairie schooner, with a pair of oxen attached, and an emigrant train bound for the Rocky Mountains. Then follow all the famous features of the Great Forepaugh Show, including its great herd of elephants, hundreds of horses, and its many massive dens, cars, etc., In this parade was also an old canoe which had once carried Washington in his travels. This canoe was purchased by Forepaugh from the widow of its last owner, and it was then mounted on wheels and appeared in the Wild West Department of the parade. "An Indian is seen seated in this primitive craft, resting upon his paddle, and with its historical association, forms one among the many moving, realistic tableaux in our Grand national and patriotic parade".

DATES OF INTEREST TO CIRCUS HISTORICAL MEMBERS

W.C.Coup's Big Show played Mansfield, Ohio., on May 14th, 1881.

Burr Robbins & Colvin's Great American & German Allied Shows were organized in Janesville, Wisc., for the season of 1881. Den Stone - was listed as one of the clowns. This show had a nice line-up of performers.

Van Amburg and Frost Menagerie - played Westerley, R.I., Oct. 15, 1881.

McMahon's Circus closed in Oakland, Calif., on November 4th, 1889.

John O'Brien's circus played Jersey City, N.J., June 21st to 26th, 1886.

Willis' Oriental Pavilion Show opened the season at Jeffersonville, Ind., on May 25th, 1886. (Possibly Historian Duble can give us more re this one). We learn that its exhibitions were under a 150' round top, with stage, that it travelled by wagons, had 18 horses - and this was its 3rd season.

Mardell & Co's Circus played Chattanooga, Tenn., April 26th-27th, 1889.

Hagenbeck-Wallace played Grand Island, Nebr., June 9th, 1909 and at North Platte on June 12th.

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